

Masthead Logo

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# Exhaustion

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## Four Poems · Marianne Boruch

### OLD BALL FIELD

Birds suddenly forlorn in such a field, school hours,  
so the land empties itself  
back to simple pasture. A flock of sparrows, and then  
another flock descend and rise, descend  
and rise haphazard. This one,  
that one there.

It's probably the light. Late morning,  
cloudy, and the birds too hungry because  
it's spring. *It's spring*, says  
the silent couple in the dugout, three hours now  
of skipping school, and kissing there,  
not an eye between them open.

### EXHAUSTION

Snow lay like exhaustion  
all over the yard. Then why  
this thrill waking up to see it  
as though some  
large mystery had given up  
and said *here*.  
Snow, the slow boat. The great  
tiredness in it  
is a haven the way  
great loss is a haven.  
No one does it deliberately  
but one gets brought to this  
as though to an altar  
at the beginning of winter.  
Where I walked all fall aspen leaves,

poplar, maple  
stained the sidewalk. Their fate  
is to become  
something else. One foot and one foot  
and one foot. The way  
is deeper now and the leaves  
are under all of it.  
I would like to say  
I could hear them, that the leaves  
love to sing and have  
many songs under the snow.  
I would like to say  
all kinds of nonsense.

### AUBADE

Rain. And the birds—one  
sings as an acrobat might  
fake a fall  
downstairs—every seasick turn  
graceful unto  
the darkest landing. But rain  
carries its weight  
straight down, like sadness does,  
falling through a thought  
to flood a room.

Listen to the yard. One song  
builds and one unravels. Because I  
dare not move, because you're  
sleeping now as you never do.  
I know that lantern light  
in you, and dawn is bird  
by bird. Rain  
loves it dark and makes  
a sea.